

WT07-32, Continued

In her novel, Song of the Lark, Cather calls the building the "Duke Block" and gives the "Moon" to the town—"Moonstone."

"Dr. Howard Archie had just come up from a game of pool with the Jewish clothier and two traveling men who happened to be staying overnight in Moonstone. His offices were in the Duke Block, over the drug store. Larry, the doctor's man, had lit the overhead light in the waiting-room and the double student's lamp on the desk in the study. The isinglass sides of the hard-coal burner were aglow, and the air in the study was so hot that as he came in the doctor opened the door into his little operating-room, where there was no stove. The waiting-room was carpeted and stiffly furnished, something like a country parlor. The study had worn, unpainted floors, but there was a look of winter comfort about it. The doctor's flat-top desk was large and well made; the papers were in orderly piles, under glass weights. Behind the stove a wide bookcase, with double glass doors, reached from the floor to the ceiling. It was filled with medical books of every thickness and color. On the top shelf stood a long row of thirty or forty volumes, bound all alike in dark mottled board covers, with imitation leather backs." ( Song of the Lark, p. 3).

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage: Less than one acre  
UTM Coordinates: 14/E540970/N4437580

Verbal Boundary Description: South 3.5 feet of lot 3 and all of lots 4-8, block 5, Original Town of Red Cloud, Webster County, Nebraska.

WT07-43

- 1. NAME: Matthew R. Bentley house  
"Wick Cutter" house
- 2. LOCATION: 845 No. Cedar
- 4. OWNER: James E. and Ida M. Burress  
ADDRESS: Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970

82-4927

7. DESCRIPTION: The M. R. Bentley house was built in 1883 by carpenter J. Brubaker. The house is a one-and-one-half story frame building, cross-shaped in plan with a bay window on the south of the main body of the house and with a shed-roofed bay on the south of the rear wing (photo #27).

The house is a carpenter version of the Gothic Revival, being of a symmetrical form with projecting entrance pavilion so commonly associated with that residential style in Nebraska. The cross gabled roof, each gable displaying a simple king-post motif, enhances the stylistic interpretation, especially on the entrance pavilion with its steeply-pitched gable. Sawn-board cutout decorations enhance the pedimented hoods, and the sills of each window.

WT07-43, Continued

The full-frontal porch is a twentieth century replacement of the earlier Victorian porch but retains its essential dimensions. A frame, board-and-batten sheathed carriage barn with a clipped-gable roof occupies the rear of the site.

8. SIGNIFICANCE: Mr. and Mrs. Bentley were natives of England and New York, respectively, and came to Nebraska from Iowa. Matthew R. Bentley was the prototype for "Wick Cutter," the "Black Hawk [Red Cloud] money lender." Mildred Bennett has stated that when they came to Red Cloud, Mrs. Bentley opened a millinery shop and made enough money to start her husband in his loan business (Bennett: 1961, p.82).

After the construction of the house, the Webster County Argus(Oct. 25, 1883, p. 7) stated that it was ". . .one of the most elegant and tasty dwellings in this section of the country, not from any lavish architectural display, but from its harmonious design, and the neatness and taste with which it had been carried out." Cather described the house this way: "They dwelt in fussy, scroll-work house, painted white and buried in thick evergreens, with a fussy white fence and barn." ( My Antonia, p. 210).

Cather continues,

"Cutter often threatened to chop down the cedar trees which half-buried the house. His wife declared she would leave him if she were stripped of the 'privacy' which she felt these trees afforded her. That was his opportunity, surely; but he never cut down the trees." ( My Antonia, p. 213).

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage: Less than one acre  
UTM Coordinate: 14/E540860/N4438070

Verbal Boundary Description: Lots 1-3, block 8, Smith and Morre's Addition to Red Cloud, Webster County, Nebraska.

WT07-54

- 1. NAME: Warner-Cather house  
Second Cather house 82-4928
- 2. LOCATION: 541 No. Seward Street
- 4. OWNER: Ruby Mae Copley  
ADDRESS: 541 No. Seward, Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970

7. DESCRIPTION: Built by Joseph and Sylvia Warner, probably in the late 1890's, the house was sold to Charles F. Cather in 1903. The Cathers continued to live in the house until the death of Willa's mother in 1931.

The house is a large one-and-one-half story frame structure, a deep-rectangle in shape with a slightly projecting gabled wing on the north. The gabled front facade faces east and features two bays with the assymmetrically placed entry in the left (south) bay. A round-arched attic light with keystone is placed in the shingled gable (photo #28).

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